United States Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Service

3101 Park Center Drive

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SUBJECT: Bisphenol A (BPA) and WIC Foods

TO: Regional Directors
Supplemental Food Programs
All Regions

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released updated information on Bisphenol A (BPA) on January 15, 2010. For this information, visit: www.hhs.gov. BPA is a chemical that has been used for more than forty years in making many hard plastic food containers such as baby bottles and reusable cups and the lining of metal food and beverage cans, including canned liquid concentrate and ready-to-feed infant formulas.

In 2008, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducted a review of toxicology research and information on BPA, and, at that time, assessed that food-related materials made with BPA on the market were safe. But recent studies have reported subtle effects of low doses of BPA in laboratory animals. While BPA is not proven to harm children or adults, these newer studies have led federal health officials to express some concern about the safety of BPA. The FDA is the scientific and regulatory authority for determining the safety aspects of BPA.

FDA does not recommend that families change the use of infant formula or other foods, although it does recommend reasonable steps to reduce BPA exposure. Consistent with these recommendations, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is not making any changes in approved WIC food products. We are advising you of this latest update and will continue to provide additional information as it becomes available.

What is HHS recommending for infant feeding?

HHS supports the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics that breast milk is the optimal source of nutrition for infants. If breastfeeding is not chosen, iron fortified infant formula is the safest and most nutritious alternative. FDA has found that powdered infant formula mix typically has no detectable levels of BPA. Although there are small amounts of BPA in liquid infant formula in cans, infant formula in this packaging can offer important health advantages for some infants, and the proven benefits of good nutrition outweighs the potential risk of BPA exposure. For example, some special infant formulas may only be available in cans, and some families may need ready access to premixed formula. **Therefore, FDA does not recommend that families change the use of infant formula.** Parents should discuss any significant changes to their baby's diet with their health care provider.

Most newer baby bottles and drinking cups are not made with BPA. However, because BPA levels rise in food when BPA-containing containers are heated, parents who continue to use old BPA-containing polycarbonate plastic baby bottles should be reminded of proper safe food preparation, such as, not heating baby bottles in the microwave or putting very hot or boiling liquid in them. Information on reasonable steps families can take to reduce exposure to BPA can be found at: www.hhs.gov.

What Does this Mean for WIC?
In keeping with FDA's recommendations, FNS will not make any changes to the WIC Program's approved infant formula products. FNS recognizes, however, that some parents and caretakers of WIC participants may have concerns about the HHS update. FNS suggests that WIC State agencies advise participants about safe food preparation practices to minimize BPA exposure. Additional information can be found at: www.hhs.gov. Participants with specific questions about feeding practices for their infant or child should contact their health care provider.

Please share this information with your State agencies. We will continue to provide you with additional information on this subject as it becomes available and will work with you to address any specific questions that your State agencies may have.

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